

Where the wind takes me



Summer 2006
Written by D
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Gulf of Mexico

Just another travel 'zine?? you bet.

Let me just start by saying that one thing I learned while traveling the country this past summer '06 is how to rely on instincts and how to trust people, because in most circumstances in life, whether it can be realized or not, trust in yourself and others around you is all you can really depend on. Physical comfort is only necessary when it's needed; beyond that, life is emotional, political, and not always desirable.. Emotions and various other subjective understandings about life determine who we are, what we do, how we act, and our future. On that note, it is important that you, as the reader, understand that my stories are half-emotion, half-fact, but mostly I want to share the things I've learned about relationships, travel, gender dynamics, actual poverty vs. chosen poverty, and the various other lessons along the way. For the sake of clarity, I've tried to italicize the emotional stuff;

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SEPTEMBER 6

2:47 AM

Last leg of my journey, it should take me about 15 hours to do what I spent the past 2 1/2 months doing, but this time it involves heightened discomfort and the feeling that I know exactly here I'm going. This is going to be a long night/day, I've been loathing this, still not as certain about leaving the place that's given me everything I've needed exactly when I've needed it, even here, when I became somewhat more hopeless, one of the three people around seems to enjoy giving me cigarettes at the exact point that I ran out of papers. Before I wanted a Discman and batteries, the Discman was left at Hellarity, batteries still packed in my bag (one of the few things I happened to have not used yet). They all tell me I should stay, I promise them that I'm coming back soon. I can't tell if it's a lie or not. Mali told me to really take in my home/living situation, to take in what I've learned from my experiences and use those lessons to try and really understand and feel what it is about wherever I am in life that I want to hold on to, reject what needs to be rejected, and find those cracks in my own area that I found here, that maybe I just need to explore the communities and subcultures within the place I currently call home and find my own place there.

5:10 AM

It seems that the new "no liquids" policy is more futile than prior "security" measures, reminds me that I'm still in the U/S/ and it's passed my time to get back to Europe. But I think that trying to maintain my sense of who I feel I've become, or have developed into this summer, is what makes this going-home night different from last year's, that what got me to reaching my goals and dreams (I actually made it all the way across!) was inside myself, that what caused me to love the East Bay so much is that it brought out things inside that I'd been neglecting because there still exists that element of free-spirited life that differs from other areas. want it

And suddenly I get to this area where you can have anything you want as long as what you want is what you need, and the things you come across that you don't need are usually needed by the person right next to you, so they remember that you're who shared and they reciprocate somehow, and community and family grow from that. It is such an organic process, almost all the time anything you want to materialize does materialize, and just at those moments in which this doesn't feel to be the case, you find out you're wrong again. And it all feels natural, no one's trying to share, people aren't set to go out and save the world. It is an understood feeling of reciprocity, one that feels as though it really should exist everywhere, I know it grew in my heart, but I also knew it was already there, it just wasn't being properly nurtured. It would be hard to maintain that in New York City, it'll be really hard to simply re-adjust to everything there, but I know it is possible. It's just about boarding time, time to officially say goodbye. That's what the past day has consisted of; I made some really genuinely awesome friends. I hate goodbyes.

Spent the remainder of the day making our way back to Oakland, killing off the keg, relaxing for a night, and today I got the crust out of my hair, detoxed a lot, and actually was slightly productive in dumpstering some dried goods, discussing logistics of the IWW's General Assembly at the meeting, screening my Sbux piece which they agreed to show at the Saturday night party, baking muffins for my current "housemates," and now I've just spent the past few hours getting re-acquainted with the ol' Internet. Tomorrow morning it's back to Food Not Bombs, maybe I'll hang out with Liza and Ted at "Oakland's McCormicks," and Thursday night starts Geekfest, another weekend of drunken punk rock mayhem.

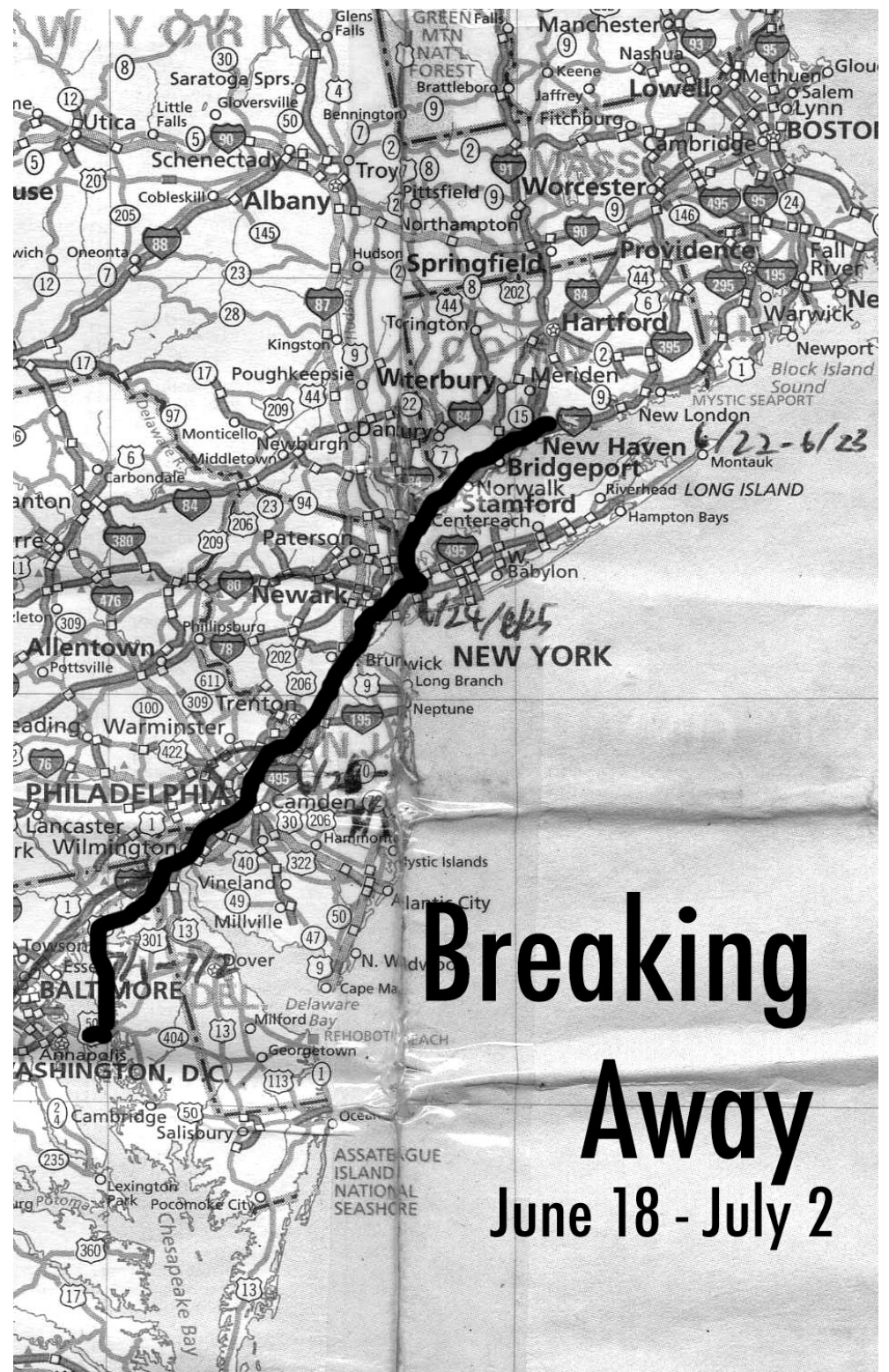
Still haven't gotten my plane ticket back home, still don't want to go home. One thing I learned from last summer's travels is that when you find a place you love, you don't leave it. I know I need to go back, and the time is really catching up on me, but maybe I'll be able to be happy back in the place that I know is my home, not someone else's. Maybe if I stay the appeal of this place will wear off. But we'll see where I end up, I know I don't have to stay anywhere forever and I know that for once I'm actually happy somewhere, and if I want there's already a potential room here for me. There's another 2 weeks left of summer. We'll see what happens.

AUGUST 24

I finally ordered the ticket off my parents' frequent flyer miles account (free cross-country flight), finally made the decision to go home. I'm feeling constant compulsive energy, not in place here at all anymore, the comfort and happiness wore off, started making frantic text-messages, frantic activities, frantically bought the ticket and now I'm frantically on the train to San Francisco ("the city," or so they say). I thought about it, it felt stupid that I'd only been there once in the three weeks I've been here. It reminds me of what I do at home when I need to get away, take a train somewhere and explore. Except when I do that there I have the option of going back home, here I don't. Maybe it actually is all the same wherever you go; maybe my perceptions of myself and others are just different here. I have haven't been to the area I'm aiming to go today (Fisherman's Wharf/Golden Gate) since three years ago, since I was physically and emotionally disabled by disease and a destructive relationship. I need to get back to myself again, I need to stop getting caught up in these superficial relationships, in these mind games.

4:55 PM SAN FRAN

Watching the fog roll in over the Golden Gate Bridge. I think that means I successfully traveled across the country. Beyond that bridge is the other ocean. I guess this is it. This was the goal. NYC to San Francisco.



WASHINGTON, D.C.
SUNDAY, JUNE 18, 2006
IT'S TIME TO GO NOW

To me, summer really began a week ago at Tompkins Square Park, and I hope to keep going 'til I'm broke and have to go home. This being the case, I have one more day left here in DC (Happy Father's Day), then it's off to unload and refresh in Jersey City, and west from there....

At times it will all remain stagnant for months and then within a few days everything changes, and you just know it could all change again within a few more days so you have to let those amazing moments incubate inside before some brutal reality kicks in. But for now, selfish notions of desire are dominating; I don't even want to think about neglect or heartbreak because I'm finally not feeling like the victim of either of those things. But more so than a need to get away from people or things here, I really want to explore. The frustration came out today - I mean, I love my friends and family here, but I should have gone south when I went north, should have gone west when I went south, and soon when I go back north I should really steer clear of familiarity, comfort and addiction and keep myself task-oriented for leaving, before I get stuck. The new compass my parents picked up for me will aid in that...



ATTEMPT #1
JERSEY CITY - PORT CHESTER, NY - NEW HAVEN, CT - PORT CHESTER, NY - JERSEY CITY
JUNE 22-24

It was almost as if it was supposed to happen this way, as screwy as the beginning was it all sort of came together in the end, simply by relying on instinct and going back home when we needed to. We made it as far as New Haven, an interesting yet insane and frustrating town where we met a nice girl who lives with her dad, and a lot of psychotic people. I found out about travel plans that could work out perfectly when we got back to New York, which I wouldn't have found out if we hadn't left when we knew we should have.



Well, first came the meet up back at Hellarity for some tea and van-cleaning, then off to the stores for keg, food, water, and we picked up Rob, CJ, Jason, Shannon, and John, then the beer-drinking commenced on the way, through beautiful Napa Valley into the mountains. We picked up a hitchhiker who busted his hand on a bike, listened to Oingo Boingo and "mystery tape," and as soon as we got there I sat and chilled by a tree and within two minutes, sap filled my hair and the crustiness really came on strong. I don't remember most of the rest of the night, I do remember stumbling on one campsite for pasta, getting lost on my way back to the bathroom and stumbling on another site with whiskey, some funny dudes who were convinced I was a Lithuanian gypsy who wandered in from the woods. I passed out there only to be woken up by Steve at 6 AM at which point he informed me that I had been "elfed," having been declared as "drunkest of the night" - and I apparently was tied to the other drunkest person of the night. Then I napped most of Saturday, and Saturday night was more drunken crusty mayhem. I met Rob's friends who were all about 16 years old; they had an Emilio Estevez joke going ("What do you call a guy with a cold who really likes Emilio Estevez? Emilio Decongestezvez...What do you call someone who thinks that movie about hockey was awesome? Emilio Impresstivez," and this went on for a while). This night I managed to make it back to our site, under a weird vinyl/silver tarp deal that Jason set up as a tent - probably the punkest looking site I saw there - passed out with Steve, woke up, made food, packed the van with about 6-7 new crusties who needed the ride back. We were all absolutely fucking filthy, definitely secret shoppers at gas stations far and wide must have been overwhelmed.

Within 5 minutes of being at a stop, 3 cop cars rolled by to ticket one kid Chris for public urination, I questioned the cops, they questioned me back. This wasn't a typical questioning, it was resemblant of interrogation except that when the cop asked me about who we were ("punks, I guess") I told him that we weren't really part of a group. Then he asked if we were "emos" I started laughing, he actually did too, and I was all "no, I mean there are 'emos' in the subculture but that's not who we are." Best accusation ever.

AUGUST 15

I woke up this morning in the arms of a spurt of last night's romance, took a long walk alone, type up a zine contribution, met and spoke/walked with a really nice guy who gave me a bag filled with Echinacea tea from the Purple House (as I felt sick earlier), made good soup, played cards with a nice little boy who lives here, got stoned alone, and now I'm writing and drinking tea by soft pirate radio music. Long story short, I made my decision to spend the remainder of my summer here. One thing I learned from Europe last summer is that you don't leave a place you know you love. The way things have been going is that more and more things here are plentiful (food, internet), more and more people here are awesome, and life in general seems to be getting better and better everyday. It almost seems unreal, last night seemed unreal no-doubtedly, this morning felt the same, despite the doubts I had in my head regarding the reality outside those walls.

AUGUST 23

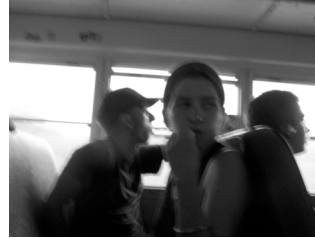
This place was starting to wear on me a bit, suddenly I felt out of place, like the new people I'd met were all within fleeting relationships that come with traveling, and then on Thursday night I left Hellarity, due to some emotional aspects of oddly defined relationships I'd had with people there, and called up my friend Paul who'd I'd met at Fort Awesome a few weeks back when I helped chop veggies for Food Not Bombs, who also happened to have mentioned to me that he had a guest room at his place.

Then things started turning back up - I met up with Paul at Long Haul, we got here and suddenly I was greeted by a new set of friendly strangers who gave me my own bathroom-converted-to-bedroom (I'm basically sleeping on a mattress on top of an old bathtub with a toilet and sink next to me, which is actually a lot more awesome than it sounds) and a warm vegan meal. Then woke up super early on Friday for a nice long walk, got out to Fort Awesome for another round of cooking, and then Steve called, wondering why I'd left so abruptly "as passing ships" or something of that nature, and invited me for a weekend of camping in the woods near Clear Lake (somewhere northeast of the Bay Area), I stalled on my decision and finished cooking up the split pea soup, Steve met me, we walked to the sharing and he gave me a thorough description of the different genres of punk culture in the East Bay, then we arrived at People's Park to meet with all the other awesome folks around, I decided to go camping, we went to the store to pick up some trail mix and stuff, then I got all "prettied up" for the Long Haul anniversary party! This was the point in which my sobriety ended for 4 straight nights. The night started pretty tame, just a few beers and some food, and then boom, the place was filled with drunk and apparently hash-brownie-high folks. We all realized that we got wasted too late and went wandering around for the "after-party"...I met some cool dudes, Cooper from Cali somewhere and one European guy who lives in San Fran. We stayed up drinking Tecate, passed out in random bedroom of random house at 6 AM, and woke up by 9 to go back "home," pack up my shit and then on to

Liber-mutcha-fuckin'-tAtia!

JUNE 30

Although we only made it as far as New Haven in one direction and Philly in the other, it feels further because of the mindset. For some reason I already miss home, it feels ridiculous to always need to be on the prowl for things that I have right here if I would just overcome this fear of accepting the comfort that comes with them. I thought I was in love with someone, I think I was just in love with the vehicle that could get me away from everything. We didn't make it far but I already want to ditch the "vehicle" and just stay where I know I could be happy and with actual loved ones, even though I'm curious about what's out there. I've come to realize that I want to explore the world in my own way and I want to be capable of doing it; this is why I despise commitment. Or maybe I'm just underestimating what other people can do and I need to learn how to trust them.



on the bus



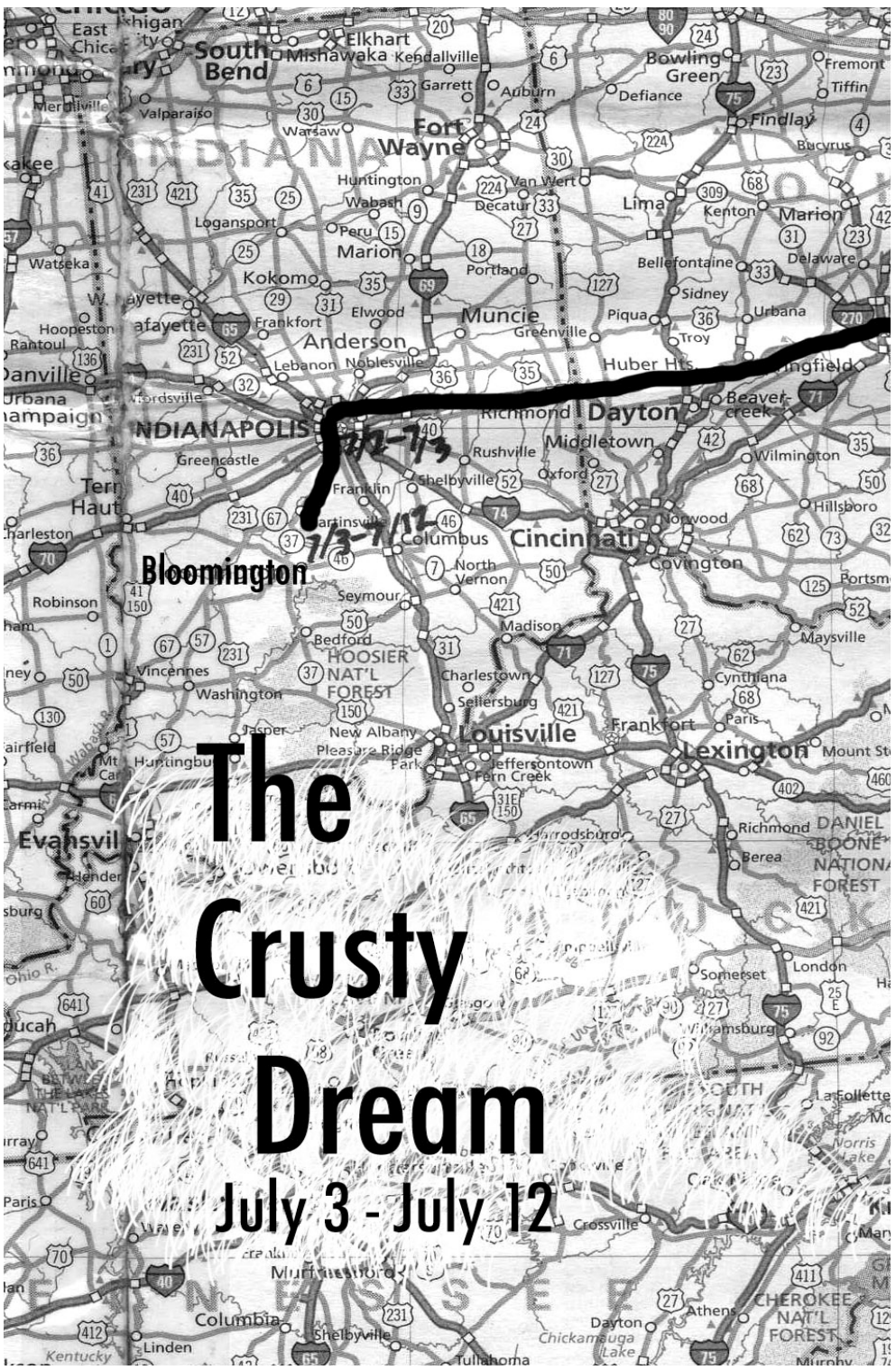
leaving Philly

RT. 70 WEST OUT OF BALTIMORE, MARYLAND

JULY 2

The first goal of travel was getting to Bloomington for Plan-it-X Fest, and after the initial attempt of heading north, my friend Sheila reminded me that the anarchist book fair was this weekend in Baltimore and I could probably hitch west with kids from there. I called some other Jersey traveling friends who also had been having problems getting west (they were stuck in southern Virginia), and told them if they made their way up to Baltimore they'd be able to get west too, and maybe even come to Bloomington if they wanted! Me, Aaron and Luca (former roommate from home who I convinced to quit his job and come travel with us) met up with Matt and Colin in front of Red Emma's (the local anarchist bookstore) where they were making oatmeal and drinking cheap pomegranate juice, we caught up and chatted for a bit. Then after a long walk to Whole Foods for free corn husks and vegan berry pie that Matt was insistent on purchasing ("if we all chip in a buck we can all eat vegan pie!"), and as the day grew to night, we each separately received calls from the dude on the housing board who told us to meet back at the book fair spot at 8 PM for directions to housing. Housing, which would normally be a living room or a warehouse space, turned out to be a very-recently squatted spot that took about an hour to get to from the city. But we got in okay, cooked eggplant over a dirty waffle iron, drank 40s and ate the vegan pie for dessert, slept on cardboard, and the next day shit really started coming together. After asking around at the book fair for rides or at least a piece of paper that said "rideshare" on it, my friend Ryan hooked us up with a ride to Indianapolis via awesome kids from Lawrence, Kansas who owned an anarchist school bus. We piled in, each person in the bus from all over got their own seat, and we were finally heading west!

Now I'm finally starting to see mountains and opening up communication with Aaron, outgrowing and overcoming fears that I didn't even realize I had until they were tossed my way and there was no escaping them. Because of being able to actually talk I think we all feel a little bit better, and I knew inside that's what needed to happen. We're only now entering the mountains of western Maryland (practically still home), but after traveling up and down the northeast for three weeks it feels different, feels like I'm in the right mode, with the freedom and frustrations and excitability of not knowing what's next.



The Crusty Dream

July 3 - July 12

AUGUST 12

So, after a little drama and a few shitty people, we ended up at "Hellarity" – a 15-year-old "intentional community" in the East Bay. This place has a pirate radio station broadcasting from a bedroom (104.1 FM - Berkeley Liberation Radio), an amazing garden/yard, communal food and chores, gray-water sewage system, and the best part is that they do all this and they're not drunk punks, they're not hippies, they're just slightly older squatters who are actually responsible and know what they're doing. I'll be writing or drawing up something for the one guy who let us in, Robert, since he's been doing a zine on different subjects and the next issue happens to be the "beer" issue!

But the people who live here are rad, they don't mind traveling kids as long as they contribute to the cleaning/cooking and don't take up much room, and since we've been here we got to hook up with more awesome people. There's a chain of houses: the Purple House, the Gillman House, the Playground, Fort Awesome, the Warehouse, etc.... All of these guys know each other, a good network of resources and friends. I finally got the "behind the scenes" at how the best Food Not Bombs I've ever seen operates, and even spent hours chopping veggies and sharing with them! What they do is there are different groups of people and different cooking spots each day, in addition to specific schedules on donation pickups and dumpstering and all that jazz. And to transport the food they have wagons attached to their bikes. The food came out tasty and was left at "the Playground," where we went last night for a pretty rad party, mostly outdoors with a lot of artsy stuff and a fire. Also today I got to hike up a small mountain/hill on the edge of Berkeley and watch an apartment fire and news choppers. No one died.



the fire

AUGUST 13

I've always hated Sundays anyway, too much time to do nothing, too much of noting going on. I need to stop waiting for life to hand me things; that's what I spent too long doing, too much longer trying to get away from it, never actually getting to a point in which I was content, always feeling out of place, always avoiding the reality of my situation. Maybe I don't belong here, maybe there's really nowhere I belong, no one I'm supposed to be with. It's devastation but that may just be the problem, or part of the problem. I'm over-cafeinated, bored, and lacking the sheer will to simply go downstairs to have "the talk," upstairs to "pursue desire," or anywhere else but this couch on the curb to escape to. I really need to be more up-front about things; otherwise I'm destined to be in this exact situation for the rest of my life.

AUGUST 10

The full moon's setting and the sun's rising but it's hard to tell inside this house, the house 3,000 miles from home that happens to feel like home, amidst strangers, and in all the good ways that home feels like home but all the bad ways too. Maybe it's just me riding on speculation, I'm sure in a few hours when everyone wakes up everything will be different, the wine will have worn off, and I'll go back to believing that it was all just a dream, the sort of dream that I read about in books and hear from friends and family over the phone, but that never happen to people like me because I always do what I'm told, follow the rules, and in that scenario desire never wins out. The night went almost exactly how I wanted it to, but I know how these things go and anything that may have happened to appear to just be nothing at all and I'll think that it was all in my head...



the garden

For here and now I found my spot, a small log by this beautiful garden, away from people, from the living room, surrounded by cherry and prune trees. Sounds ideal, but just inches from here is the source of stress, the reason I found the spot. He went off to a show, there's apart of that hopes he's not back for a while, who wants my new take on "Mr. Right" to come in and rescue me from yet another failed relationship, to join me for a night that goes further than last night. But the sad reality is that the timing won't work out, and tomorrow we'll be back on the road – ad after I leave my contact info, maybe there's a slight chance he'll reach me in a few months, from the opposite side of the country, and I'll be left wondering what could've happened if I stayed, even though I know that wouldn't really have ever lead to anything anyway. And really what the sad reality is that I've escaped places and people almost non-stop for about two straight months now, and it still hasn't come close to satisfying my need for escape. Again, this is proof that it's all inside, in my head, but it's not like I really need evidence of that at this point.

And in light of all these new emotions about yet another new guy, there's still the note he left me this morning, the thoughts I've had in the past few days, the inevitable failure and heartbreak, the fact that I've already hurt him because he pretty much already knows what's going though my head. And I heard him tear the paper for the note this morning, and all I could think was that I wanted it to be that note, the note you see in movies, when someone takes off at 6 AM and you never see them again.

BLOOMINGTON, INDIANA

JULY 4

Made it to the first destination, and it's even two days earlier than planned. It was about 13 hours directly west from Baltimore. The Lawrence kids dropped us Jersey kids–along with Hannah who we met on the bus–off at a gas station in Indianapolis at 4 AM, where my friend Daniel met us with his big white van and drove us back to his place in what seemed like a suburb of the city, next to the third largest cemetery in the country (so he claims)!. And not far from a small shopping area where we grazed in a slightly upscale supermarket and I snatched a free cup of coffee. Then we all sat at a lake by an art museum, ate avocado, tomato and onion wraps and fruit, spent the afternoon in teams of two wandering around, trying to make our way back to Daniel's, and then I cooked and he drove about 1 1/2 hours south to Bloomington . We got into town, I separated from the group for a bit to catch up with Daniel as we drove around and chatted about how it was so different to see each other here instead of my apartment in Jersey City, and Hannah found us a beautiful place to stay on a farm with llamas, a horse, a garden, and across the street from a "cowboy bar." Aaron and I decided to sit on the chairs in front and drink the beer we'd bought in town and a fisherman with a pickup rolled up and chatted for a while. He told us his pickup line to a girl at the gas station was "you're real perrrty. wanna go fishin'?" and then she blew him off. Poor guy. He was nice, spoke with a Midwestern fishing accent, and we both simultaneously began drifting out of our paranoid-of-strangers northeast mindsets and into a state of remembering that people can be and are genuinely kind-hearted and more relaxed everywhere else in the country. At least I drifted out of that.



llama



Fireworks

JULY 5

Shit's been fun, we have a Jersey crew representin' out here and showing the Midwest that not everything they hear about Jersey isn't all that bad. Plan-it-X Fest starts tomorrow, there are punks roaming all over this little town. We set up camp at 9th Street Park, a camp officially recognized in 9th Street Park history as "Camp Totally Awesome," or CTA for short. We have a little cardboard sign, an awesome fire pit surrounded by cardboard mats where we sleep and cook, not too far from downtown, and in the morning today we made stew over the campfire. I found a tennis racket that is somehow coming in very handy. A librarian handed it to me 'cause I left it at the table and he was like "you never know when you're gonna have to play tennis" and I was all "I know!"



Bloomington army of rocks

JULY 6

After a few too many nights of not sleeping due to cold and bumpy ground, I'm pretty exhausted. Alone in the 3rd Street Park right now, surrounded by punks here for the festival. Its like the Woodstock of this generation, but with an explicitly anarchist style. This town is insane, people everywhere are nice, completely generous – giving us food when we look like we're searching for it, asking who we are, where we're from, why we're here, where we're goin' next. Everyone's sharing; I think our little posse is the angrier, more anti-social section of the bunch. The boys will be back to meet me here soon. Aaron finally got me to have "the talk" with him yesterday. There was a lot of tension, anger and heartbreak yesterday, and I think today we're all calmer and exhausted, but I still can't sleep. He's leaving soon, so are the others, and then I'll be able to go on my way alone like I was before, and how I think I want to be for a while again. With relationships come tension and jealousy, it's almost unavoidable.

OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA

AUGUST 4

Left the fair town from the gas station where speeding-dude dropped us off, these two cool dudes saw us holding a cardboard sign and drove us north to Salinas, they said they picked us up due to karma. One of their good friends just left for traveling so they wanted to ensure that she had good luck on the road. In the back of their truck we listened to Rancid and I read a significant amount of the [Zombie Survival Guide](#), followed by discussion of how we were all going to all prepare for an inevitable zombie invasion. We sat down and ate in their house, they offered to show us around and offered up a shower, but from there it was just two hours to the Bay Area so we got back on the road. Just a few rides, cruised through San Jose and some wine country, and by night time Ted and Sam picked us up and we got to drink coffee and watch "The Colbert Report" at the AK Press warehouse, then we hit up the infamous SemiFreddis bread dumpster, and then to Liza's the yuppie house-sitting spot, where we'll stay for a few nights. And it feels like home here because of a) friends from Jersey, b) high murder rate, c) 3 hour IWW meetings, d) scoping for a good wireless signal, and e) sandwiches of nutritional yeast with ketchup and mustard on dumpstered bread.

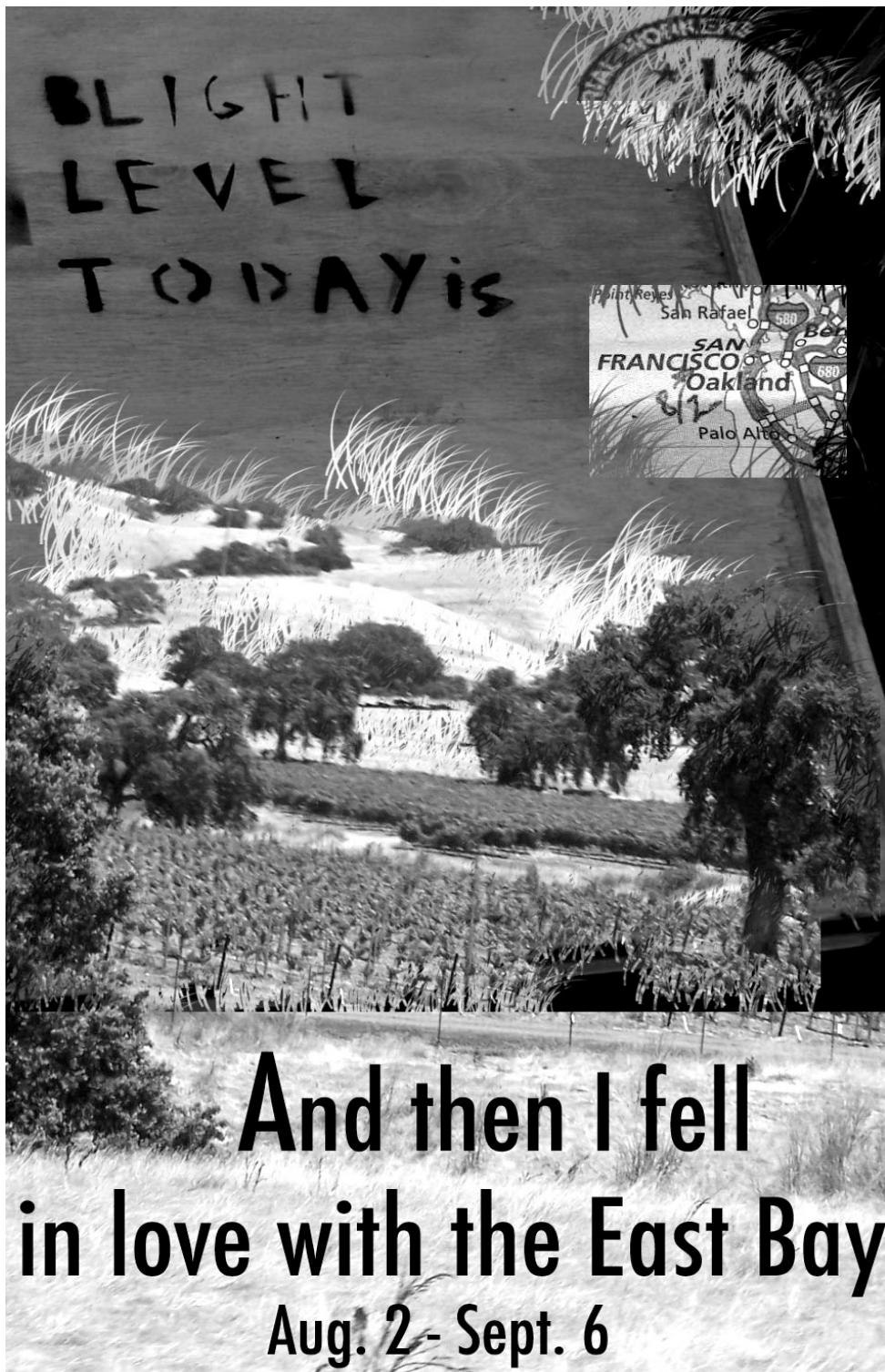
There were two goals of this trip - Bloomington and Oakland. Don't ask why, I guess it was just to have destinations other than "wherever the wind takes me," which turned out well because after a week straight of hitchhiking and sleeping in not-so-comfortable spots, it's nice to be greeted by familiar faces, fresh bread and a shower.

AUGUST 8

Suddenly always uncomfortable, always feeling unwelcome no matter where I am because to others I'm just a "traveling kid," so they're all on their highest guard, watching my every move, making sure I don't mooch too much, but even standard contribution doesn't seem to be enough, because some people have certain roles to fill, because people love labeling themselves as "compassionate" but when the situation arises for them to be what they claim to be, it turns out that this is not who they are. And suddenly I find myself wandering the "mean streets" of Oakland in the middle of the night, hoping to find a strange place with complete strangers who turn out to be nicer than supposed friends.

AUGUST 9

Now looking at a beautiful garden outside of a beautiful house (yes, it is possible for houses to be beautiful), I'm beginning to understand – or at least my calmer mood is helping me to so – that people aren't that bad. There are a few assholes who ruin certain things for everyone, but they shouldn't have to deter from what are actually good things. At the same time, my mood's shifting. I'm feeling yet another burn from the chemistry of a previous love dying, and another sting from exploring the other options, and being able to think that I do have options. I guess the largest contributing factor to my recent bout of relationship-promiscuity is my constant inherent search for the right guy, as though there is one - a belief I've been struggling with for a while, as the concept might be oblivious to the rest of reality. I mean, the situation in which I'm attracted to someone else during this trip hasn't arisen to a great extent, but there's a possibility it will happen with someone here. That's just my optimistic speculation. And what fucks with me about that is that my main worry isn't about hurting his feelings or ruining my chances of hitching back, my worry is that it will be a difficult task to manage – almost like I have to put all the pieces in the right places to make sure it goes my way, a very strategic take on promiscuity with passive-aggressive undertones, but it's worked before and actually stroked my ego when it did. Sure, this all makes me a heartless bitch, but I blame that partially on being raised to always conceal anger, disappointment, or really any emotion at all. I've also learnt over time how to play these strategic moves and how to not care about the losses and even actual pain that it may cause others. Sure, I'm a bitch.



JULY 7

Woke up to the sun rising and boxcars flying by, didn't sleep much but it was a solid few hours and comfortable at that. Meeting new people here, getting closer to the older ones, the feeling is that when all the music and people are around, there's no way I can be anti-social. When I talked to him he said it best - "It'll be just another story to tell." I wanted to disagree, but I knew it was true.

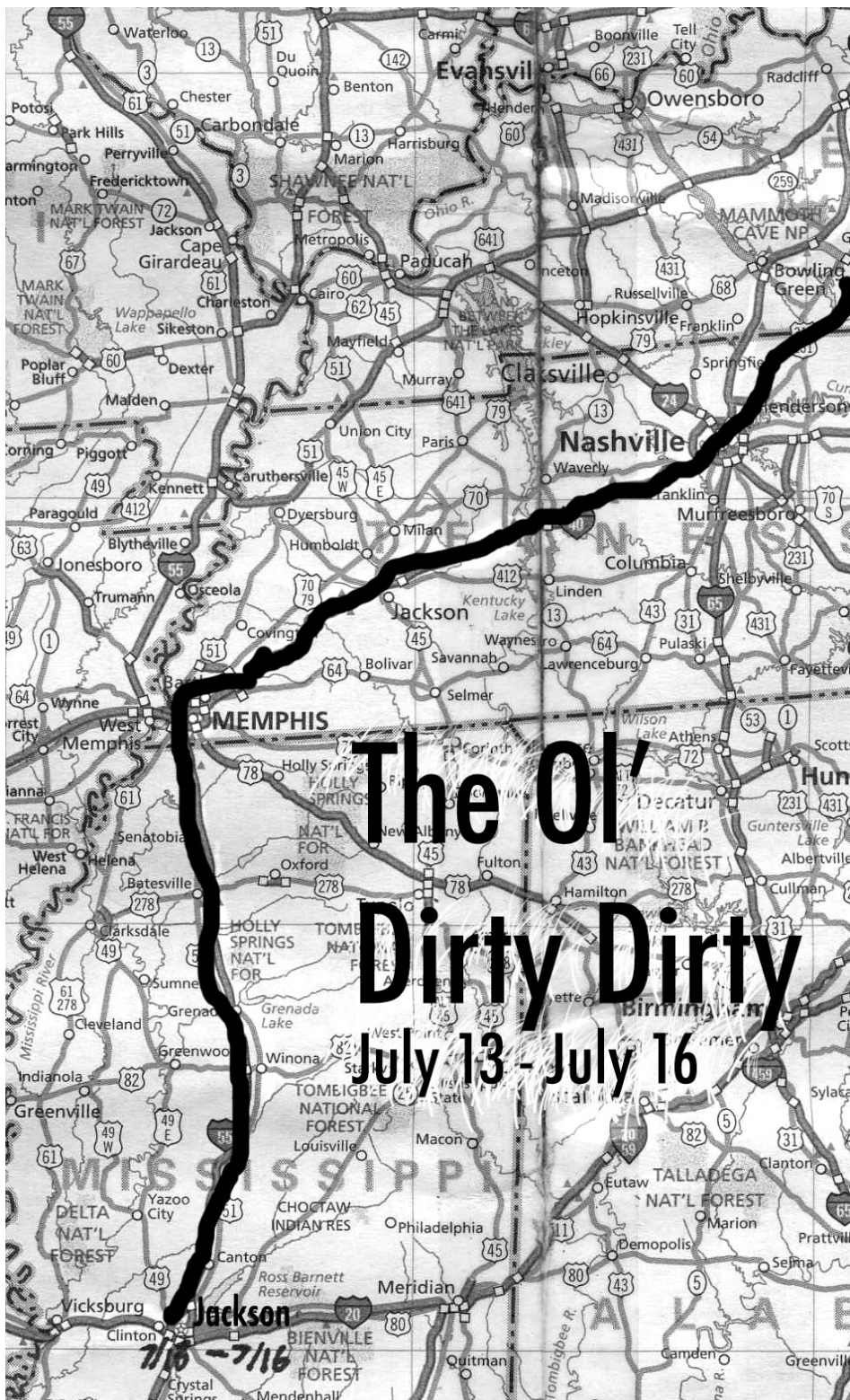


the tracks by CTA

RT. 65 SOUTH, SOMEWHERE BETWEEN LOUISVILLE AND NASHVILLE, KENTUCKY

JULY 12

Life changes so quickly that it can be confusing but makes a lot of sense when it's happening. I wasn't planning any of this, I wasn't intending on hurting anyone and I'm not quite sure if I did, but now I'm heading in a completely different direction with completely different people, going south and a little bit west, but primarily south through the beautiful green pastures of the midwest. Another leg of traveling towards "wherever the wind takes me." Having no plan; just a map, a pack, and people to help you out is all you really need. I've made it this far, doing it on my own but definitely not alone, following the desire I've had since last summer—to do exactly what I'm doing. And sure, there are moments of discomfort, haven't showered in a while and I could use a meal not involving bagels, but when I think about the "safety" of home, it reminds me of all the boredom and anxiety that come with staying in one place and not doing the natural thing to do – to discover and explore, see what I'm missing out there, see what's missing inside, and filling in the gaps along the way.



orange groves and fruit stands

SOMEWHERE IN MID-STATE CA, NEAR SAN MIGUEL

AUGUST 2

Camping out under the overpass for 101, spent the day hitching out of Santa Barbara, a realistic but based-on-luck goal for the day was to get to the Bay Area. We got a few rides from a few nice people, didn't make it all that far but got stuck in a town hosting the "mid-state fair," and suddenly it was like we were back in Texas again! Surrounded by skimpy high schoolers with Britney Spears outfits and cowboy hats, we aimed for a ride north to Salinas but ended up being a cardboard-sign-holding spectacle for idiotic fair-goers. Living like a drifter, taking what life hands you and leaving what you don't need—it all clashes with definitions of relationships, definitions of where we were going and what we *will* be doing. It feels good to tell people "we're here" when they ask, "where are ya headin' to?" I want to be able to do that everywhere I go, maybe I'm starting to be able to do that right now and right here.



the beach

SANTA BARBARA, CALIFORNIA

JULY 31

By Saturday night Carl dropped us off in Santa Clarita, just north of Los Angeles! It was a good ride, learned a lot about the lives of truck drivers, all the drug deals and prostitution rings at truck stops, what weigh stations really are, etc...

We slept outside of some corporate office that night, and our first ride in the morning was from some dude who, though he was Mexican, happened to have the same selfish, racist attitude toward other Mexicans! Seems that most of the stereotypes about this country are true, I guess I've spent too much time in the northeast and hadn't had a strong grasp on how fucked up most people's beliefs still are. Anyway, his family owned a grove so we got to pick a few oranges and after a few hours in Ventura later on, where we narrowly escaped some crazy guy who thought we were his grandkids, we got to Santa Barbara by nighttime.

Finally got to our destination, dipped my feet in the Pacific Ocean last night and slept out on the beach. It's nice here, the "duds" were in Ventura and Santa Clarita – they just didn't feel right. But here there's a white yuppie downtown, a lower-income Mexican side of town and there's the homeless who live by the tracks, plus a good Trader Joe's dumpster.

We've been able to sleep on the beach without cop harassment, and have discovered how cheap the wine is (locally made-\$2 for a decent bottle), and that much of Cali gets really fucking cold at night.

Now I'm waiting for Trader Joe's to finish closing up so we can eat for the next few days, got a decent amount of food yesterday. I'm starting to become a little homesick, constantly talking to new strangers, a lot of them are crazy, and I'm growing impatient with the fact that just because we're carrying our shit around in a shopping cart and look un-showered, most of the "normals" look at us funny, most of the ones who crave attention stop us, and I used to be fine with that, with talking to the people I was always told not to talk to, but now it all seems to go in circles, I don't know, you can't have a good conversation with a drug addict. On the plus side, it makes me want to drink less and figure out my own shit more, because regardless of material circumstances, I know I could lose it all in a heartbeat if I don't keep my head and body together, and I know I have a lot more to see and need to develop a lot better inside if I want to keep *living*, not just surviving. Some people back home seem to think I'm losing it or have already lost it. They don't understand the intensity of my natural need to be constantly altering what I'm doing, breaking from routines as soon as they develop, finding new lovers as soon as I discover the flaws of the old ones, building my strength and knowledge by constantly trying to overcome fears. In this past week I've hitchhiked halfway across the country, in this past month I've survived off very little money, basing exploration and survival off the immense wastefulness of society and off the rare generosity of fellow people. It can be frustrating - not getting picked up for hours, locked dumpsters and compacters, getting kicked out from one sleeping spot to the next, but surviving like this can be done, at least for now in life.

JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI

JULY 13

Never been to Mississippi before, and I've never done anything like this before. Freedom is apparently smelly and involves depending on the by-products of a materialist economy – this is one thing I've learnt so far. Left Bloomington with Zack Attack and Jamie, both from Georgia, who happened to have set up at Camp Totally Awesome. About an hour or two before Aaron left life as I know it now, Jamie entered it, and with him was an instant traveling partner replacement. I'm either going straight to hell for that one, or polygamy is completely natural. But either way I'm proving to myself that I can do this, I can sometimes get what I want and sometimes not, I can be a heartless bitch sometimes, sweet as sugar other times, compulsively shower at time and then go two weeks without a shower at other times.



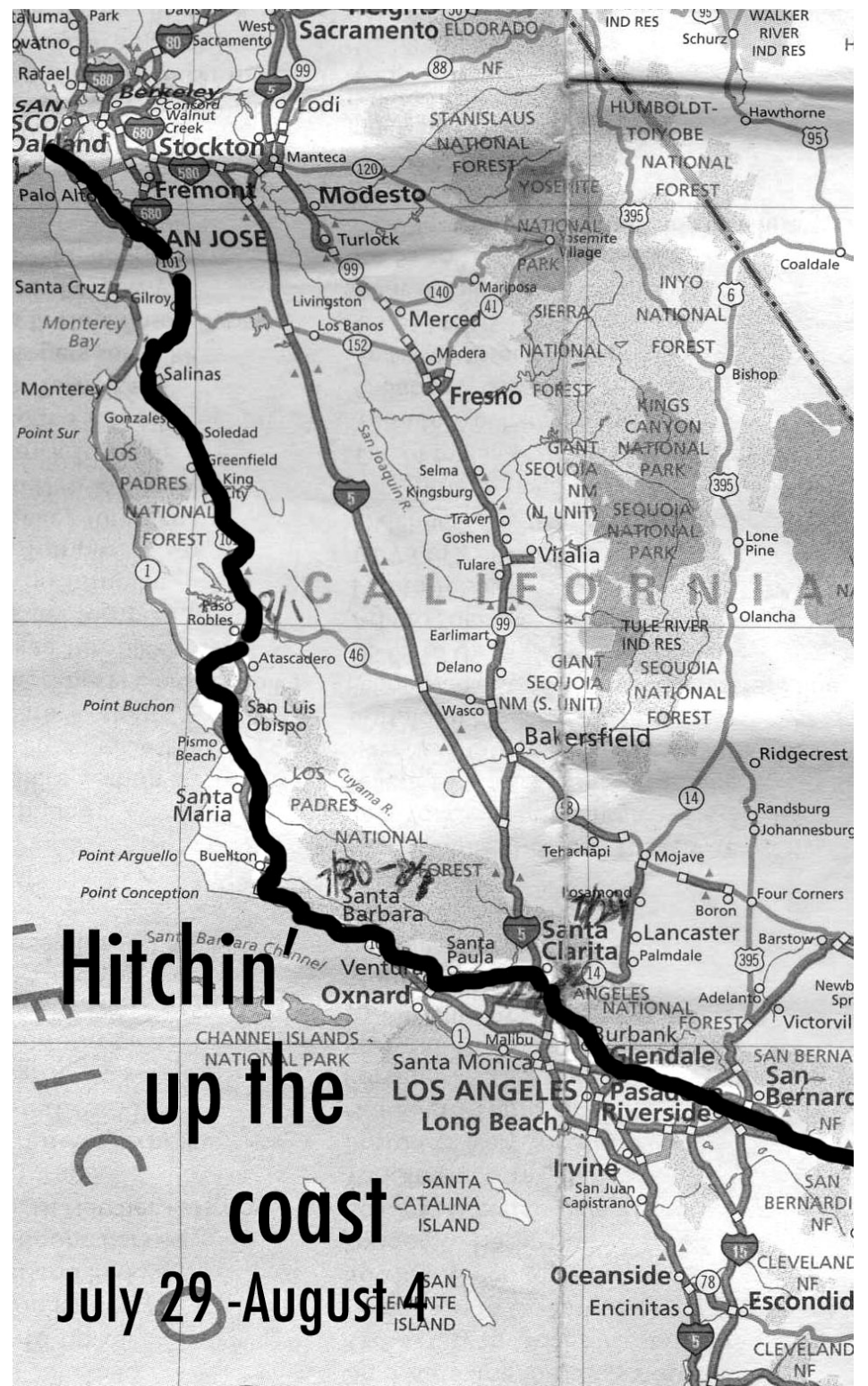
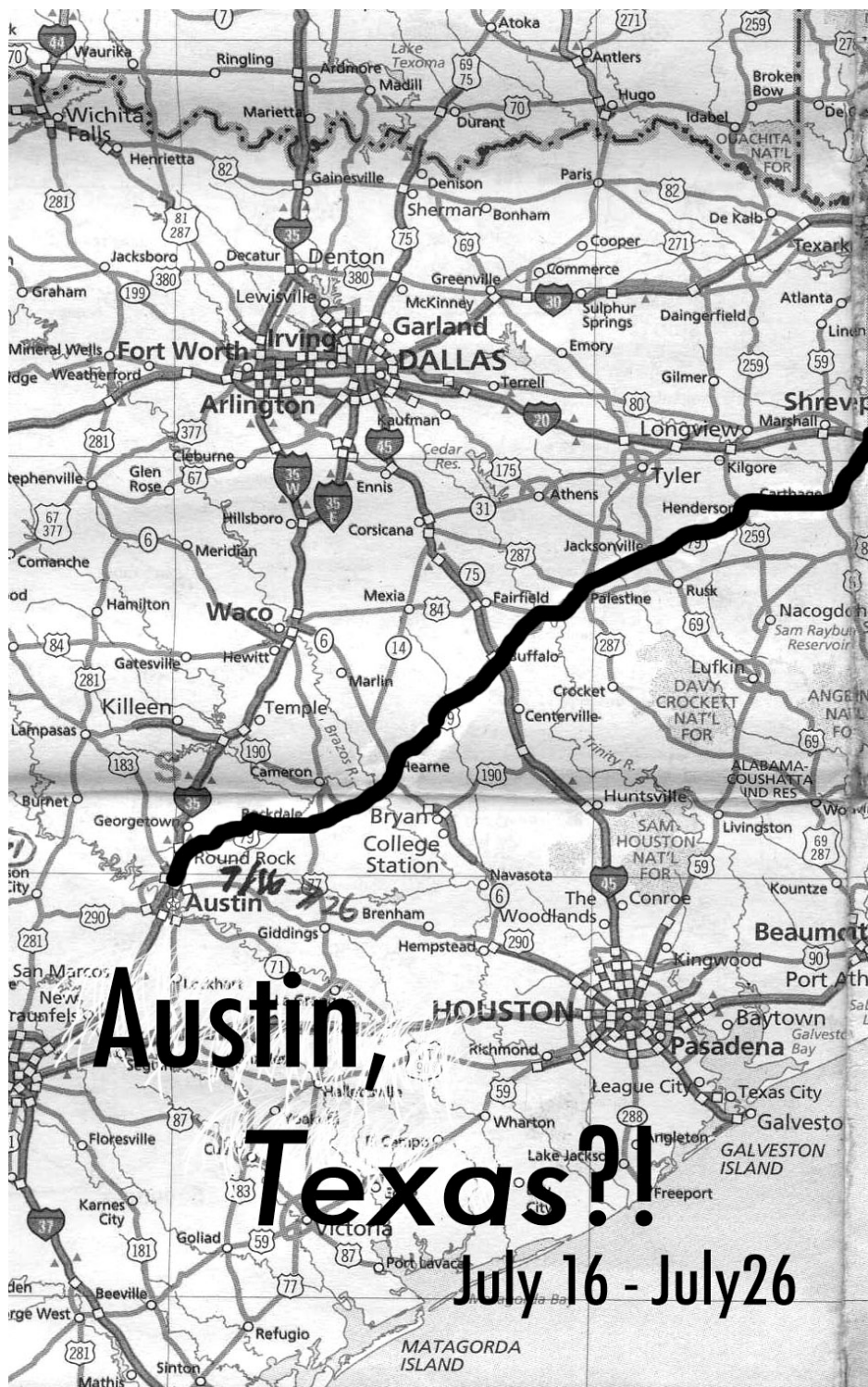
protesting OSA in Jackson

JULY 15

They did warn me about this whole thing, some nights are better than others, but tonight I'm feeling lost, confused, and mostly uncomfortable as I can't stop sweating.

The novelty of the Deep South, the excitement of a new romance, and the sense of coming down here to "make a difference" all wore off and now I want to leave again. This is what I feared – emotions catching up to me faster than I can move forward, and running doesn't help much. We came down as part of a larger convergence to help save Mississippi's last remaining abortion clinic from Operation Save America who is threatening to shut it down. When we arrived, those who were here (at the Unitarian Church) were welcoming and the idea of fighting for civil rights in the south seemed to be what mattered the most. As more and more people came and we established the ARA house with poor water, no electricity, bugs and immense heat perpetuating throughout, the dynamics changed and suddenly it became an anti-racist summer camp with no real purpose except for people to show off how macho they think they are. Yelling at each other within a park or from opposite sides of the street, "My beliefs are right, you're wrong," "No, you're wrong!" "How can I be wrong if the bible says it's true?" "Well, how can I be wrong if science says it's true" seems to go on and on, while the clinic itself can't even be seen from where this is happening.

Everything we're supposed to be fighting against is right here, inside. This whole "action," fighting the guys who are trying to fight us, is self-perpetuated bullshit. We're our own enemy, and none of us can realize that fact, which is at this point basically an absolute fact.



10 WEST, LAS CRUCES, NEW MEXICO

JULY 28 LATER IN THE EVENING

Things are working out okay, despite the setback this afternoon. We have a free ride as far west as we need to go, “all expenses paid, room and board” (the truck’s cabin has a top bunk).



riding in the truck of salvation

10 WEST, 190 MILES EAST OF LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA!

JULY 29

The sun’s finally shining, and the plan is to hitch up the coast from Santa Clarita, dodging L.A. so as to avoid the pollution and assholes that we hear so much about. The beige desert and empty valleys of New Mexico and Arizona passed by through the day, and about an hour ago the mood in this cabin that we’ve called home shifted into excitability and contentment that we made the goal, the prototypical goal of an American summer road trip – New York to California. But it still feels good, even just the way people are driving on the interstate carries the aura that “we’re all finally here!” The beautiful mountains and palm trees replacing cactus, I’m now making a vow to myself to never go back to Texas. Some aspects of the state were cool and there were definitely nice people, but all in all I’m looking back now and wondering what exactly did we do there for two weeks? I only have a month left, figure I don’t need to reserve more than a few days to get back home – Greyhound or cheap flight if need be, so that could be a good solid month of seeing the more beautiful parts of this country. Dropping out of school and simply not going back is the ideal and would be nice, but it’s simply not in me. Maybe I should have done this two years ago when it made more sense, before I committed myself to anything, or maybe it makes perfect sense right now, while I still can do it, before I get stuck somewhere by allowing someone or myself to convince me that I need to “do something with my life. Despite all my exposure to who and what are really out there in the world, and despite overcoming those small fears that are constantly holding me back from living, I’m still feeling obliged to do what I’m “supposed” to do, not what I really want.

AUSTIN, TEXAS

JULY 17

Jackson was a short story that I’d probably rather completely forget about, regardless of the “activist points” it gave me. After being there for a few days, I felt sick by the amount of southern Christian Baptists, mosquitoes, heat, patriarchal macho activism, liberals/commies and nothing to eat but stale bagels. By a stroke of pure luck there were exactly two spots in a van that swiftly shot west and into a comfortable air-conditioned house in Austin. Didn’t pay much attention to Louisiana as we drove through, but as the day turned into night on this 10-hour drive I remembered that Texas was known for its beautiful starry night sky, and in looking out at a sky covered in lights a sense of relief came over me.

JULY 18

Since we got here things have been going swimmingly! And we’re living for free in a town that seems to almost cater to runaways and homeless folks. I feel guilty because I’m neither of those two things, and I’m concealing the fact that this is a temporary lifestyle choice which I could choose to change at any moment. The first morning here we immediately were smoked up for free at Barton Springs, a clear-water creek just a bit away from the downtown area. Then we found an awesome spot under a graffiti-filled bridge to camp at, and went back out for Sparks and a free 2 AM World/Inferno show on the foot bridge, over the Red River and facing the moon rising over trains barraging by.



World/Inferno playing on the bridge

Both of our shoe soles broke while dancing, but I think it was worth it. And then the next morning we "tried on" sneakers at a thrift store, walked out with them, and went to Veggie Heaven where if you stand outside looking homeless/with a pack they'll just give you free food, and we got rice with stir fried veggies and tofu. This city's been generous to us so far, free food all over, and later I'm going to the drop-in center by the Square off Guadalupe (the main drag) to sign up for free STD/pregnancy testing – something I've been hoping to do really soon as my period is almost two weeks late, and between a DIY female health workshop in Bloomington, fighting to keep the clinic open in Jackson, and a zine of females writing about their experiences and dealing with their fears that I just read at Monkey Wrench books here in Austin, it's become more clear to myself that I can deal with any results or consequences that there may be, because I have to – it's the reality of the situation, something I really have no control over no matter how hard I try. I just hope it's negative, I hope to not have a tremendous battle that I know I'll have to overcome. But I guess time will tell.

I'm writing from the meal time at the drop-in center, I feel guilty about taking advantage of this resource, maybe exploiting the system isn't as fun or carefree as it seems. It's actually really sad for it all to be in front of me, to be the over-privileged girl who can go back home whenever she feels like it but living in poverty for now until it gets old and loses its fun. I'm almost justifying all this to myself by using the excuse of "emotional issues" as the cause of neediness, but I still feel like it's a shame, and I feel uncomfortable here.



free food abounds (not pictured: bagels and Veggie Heaven)

INTERSTATE 10 WEST, NEAR OZONA, TEXAS

JULY 28 MORNING

An overcast day, and we got picked up within 15 minutes of waiting on the side of the interstate by Carlos and Rob, two guys on their way northwest to pick up a shit ton of free firewood, they'll get us pretty far out, closer to our destination of sunny California. These guys are pretty laid back; they're not the older folks who picked us up the day before yesterday. It was very generous for the older folks to do this, a way for them to reminisce on when they were young and adventurous, for them to feel like they've done their "good deed for the day." Those folks were nice yesterday, the first major ride into Mason, a town that until recently didn't let outsiders in, where what's-his-name wrote *Old Yeller*. In all these places, I'm actually still considered a Yankee and people exclaim "New Jersey?!" when I tell them where I'm from. Hard to believe most of Texas is still the stereotypical image I imagine it to be; ranchers wearing cowboy hats, staring you down because you simply don't look like you're from around these parts. But most of them don't have harmful intentions, there's no explicitly violent bigotry, just the internalized resentment against Mexicans and "Arabs." Had a pretty minor sleep-deprived driven debate about how they wouldn't be treating us so well if our skin color was different, if we didn't look fairly middle-class and could easily pass for good Christians. The debate wasn't so much about race as it was about class. Living like this, in chosen poverty without the realities of real poverty, is by no means revolutionary. While we're not draining the resources of the planet, we're not contributing to bringing down the systems that drain those resources either.

10 WEST, FINALLY OUT OF FT. STOCKTON, TEXAS

JULY 28

EVENING

I'm sure the evil spawns of Satan come from Ft. Stockton. Got to a rest stop, this older Texan guy bought us some food and offered a ride to El Paso, he turned out to be the scumbag that makes hitchhiking not safe, so when I told him "no, I wouldn't join him in a motel room" he tossed our packs out of his pickup and sped off, leaving us off route in the heat and sitting at a gas station for 5 hours. The fucking sexism in this society mixed with the heat and the feeling that we were only halfway through Texas got to me then, but luckily we managed to spange \$60, and when I was feeling like putting effort into getting back on the road again the nicest guy in the world - a trucker from San Antonio named Carl - picked us up, and not only was he driving out to El Paso, but actually happened to be headed straight through to California!

Sure, there are a few nice people; I guess only the nicest ones are those who would pick up hitchhikers. But the stereotypes are true, the novelty wore off, and now I'm relieved to be getting out of Texas as quickly and painlessly as possible. Now I'm finally looking out to where the tumbleweeds and shrubs and dark clouds and "exotic" hunting ranches end, and where the beautiful sunset and mountains and desert begin, a sight that looks amazing, especially in light of most of the day today, in light of yet another reminder that some people are genuinely fucked up, that violent sexism is still a constant, and that even when it's not so blatant, there's always a subtle undercurrent, that in order to be protected from the ones who would rape us, we have to be protected by the ones who would speak over us, who are always turned to as "who is in charge," and who's always handed the first beer, the money, and the responsibility to do anything non-domestic. I don't know, I guess I was blinded by the northeast, I thought as a culture we were past all that bullshit. I guess I'm getting the "real American experience" out here. And now I'm remembering why I wanted to do this in Europe this summer.

ECHO CANYON RIVER RANCH

ROOSEVELT, TEXAS

JULY 27

Finally hitchhiked out of Austin and now I'm beginning to understand what images I hold of certain "types" of people really are, what they really aren't, and I'm getting a feeling of the psychology of what all my conceived enemies are thinking and why they do what they do. It all makes sense in their eyes. And I know deep down inside they're all good people, some are more welcoming, some fear strangers, but as soon as we got on Highway 71, the "back roads" that Thomas in Austin made me promise we'd go down to see what Texas was really about, it all changed. All the frustrations of waiting 12 hours for a freight train to stop, leaving at 5 AM to spend about 5 hours thumbing it for a ride on I35 (both the interstate and the train were headed to Dallas-Ft. Worth – where I didn't really want to go anyway), then the "fate bus" brought us back to Austin where we immediately ran back into familiarity, and back to where we wanted to go. Right away ran into Thomas and Ian on the bus. Thomas, someone we met and gave us a place to stay for two nights, knows a lot, seemed to be a guiding force of sorts, how Sheila was a few weeks back when she told me to go to Baltimore to hitch out west, how Jamie and Zack were in Indiana to get south, etc...it's almost like a scavenger hunt, taking hints and clues from people everywhere, random fellow travelers, friends...yesterday all five rides dropping us at points that would easily and securely get us on our way to the next destination.

.... Thomas told me to take Highway 71 out of Austin, that it was the most direct route west and took you through the more beautiful parts of Texas. I promised him we'd try it out, and within an hour we were on our way west!

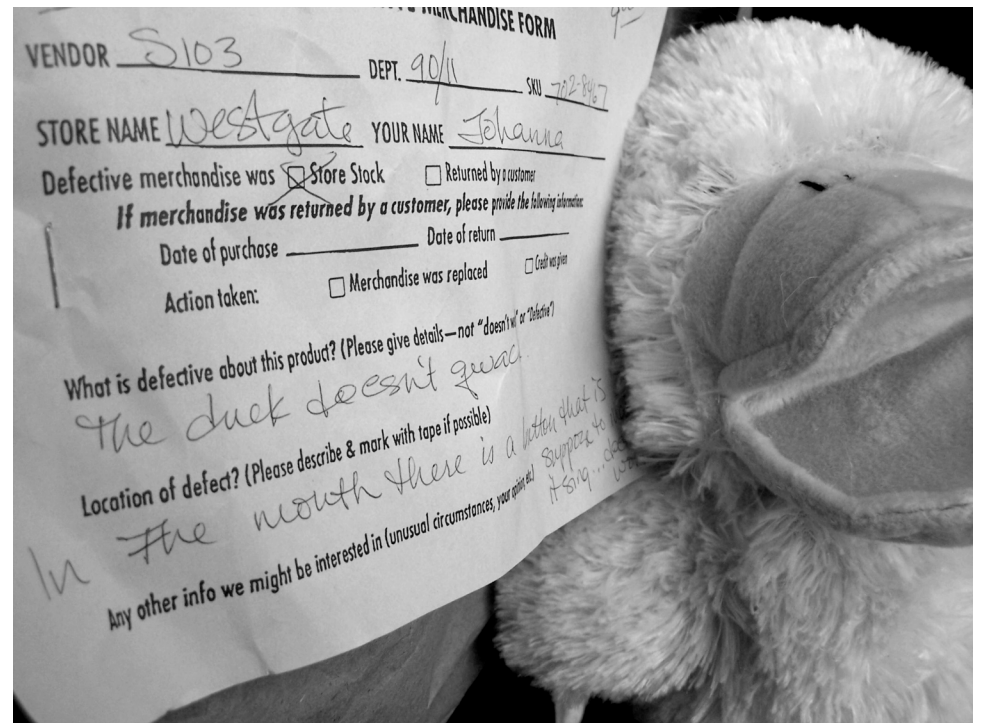


Texas countryside

First ride was a garbage man who bought us cold drinks at the gas station, then later on when we were out in the sticks this older couple picked us up and invited us to stay at their ranch, where they had extra air conditioned cabins, showers, and laundry waiting. We got there, drank a few beers, ate pasta, slept, and spent the next day chilling, swimming in the clear water creek down the hill, finding out that the ranch was for canned deer hunts (which means they keep all the deer feed in a few concentrated areas and allow hunters to stay there and shoot 'em) and finding out that the couple was pretty damn racist and right-wing. But, of course, they were the nicer people of Texas, since they actually picked us up and gave us hospitality.

JULY 19

Inside Taco Cabana, the spot just above and down the road from where we're camping out, a little morning bathroom spot, just like Bloomington Bagel Company was at the last comfortable place. Here it feels more like a challenge to resist the temptations of unnecessary luxuries – in Bloomington I felt fresher, like I was part of some punk rock summer camp community. Here, it is actually feeling like homelessness, with the rest of the world zipping by in their air-conditioned automobiles and their consistent impulse to go inside these restaurants that surround us, instead of around the back or waiting in the front for handouts. It's nice, but I'm feeling like I'm not satisfied with mooching off the system or scamming it here and there. This is all making me realize so much more how surrounded by consumption everything in this society is, that the options include working and buying within it, or living as an outsider on the fringes and struggling to survive. Or doing all three of these things at the same time, which breeds that much more internal conflict. It's hard to sleep or shower or do anything that requires privacy because you're always in public, and it's hard to totally relax because we're trained to relax via more consumption. Limbo is the best word I have for it at the moment.

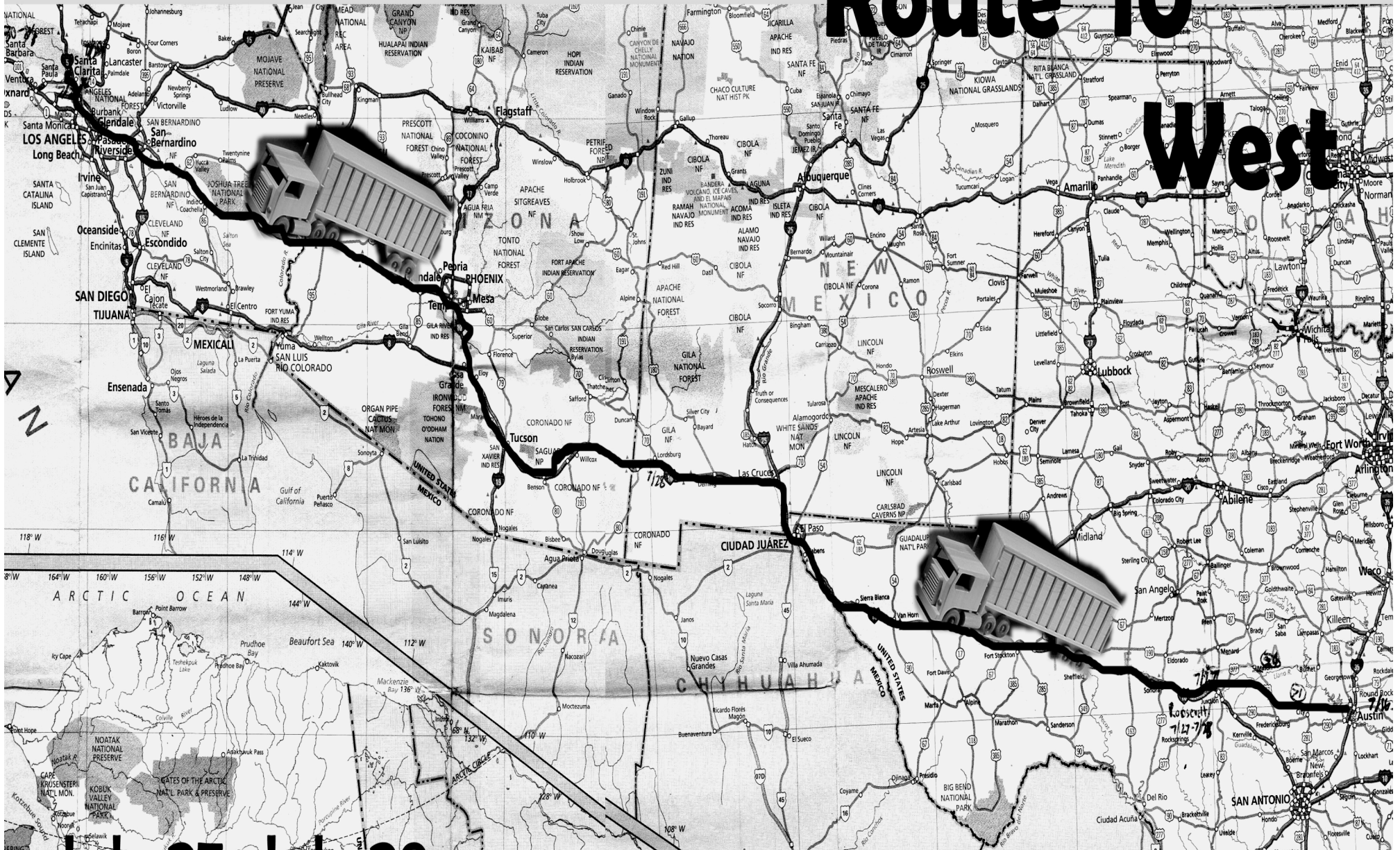


reason for getting thrown out: "duck doesn't quack"

JULY 23

Got comfortable here, too comfortable to the point where I feel discomfort, but I guess that's what happens after an extremely difference point of discomfort. I want to keep moving, frustrations are catching up with me but I don't want to say that it's the city or the people, I can't do that everywhere I go, I know it's just me.

Route 10 West



July 27- July 29